

## Stories, Heroes and Commercials. Spreading the Message across with a New Type of Responsibility

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**Abstract.** *Stories have always been a form of communication, the first form of narrative we have encountered in early childhood. And although we have grown up they continue to fascinate us. They maintain and recreate bonds with old traditions, legends, archetypes, myths and symbols. In analyzing stories, Joseph Campbell (2008) proposed the monomyth or the Hero's Journey, a basic pattern, which comprises fundamental stages and structures identifiable in all narratives from different cultures and ages. Although the pattern was further refined and enriched according to the specifics of the narrative (myth, fairy tale, dream, movie etc.) the common structural elements of the Hero's Journey from the ordinary world to a challenging and unfamiliar world include: the departure, the initiation and the return. Picking up on Campbell's model, Sachs (2012) proposes a circular representation of the hero and his/her journey. In this model, a new character, the mentor, plays a pivotal role in the shaping of the hero and his/her transformation. It is the mentor that supports the hero in her/his taking the call to adventure as well as in providing the needed support for crossing the thresholds to the supernatural world and back. Based on what Sachs (2012) suggests that brands could use storytelling as a means to engage with consumers. In doing so he argues that brands should reflect and adopt the role of mentors in their consumers' journeys, guiding them through the challenges on their own world and contributing to their personal fulfillment. This paper aims to evaluate four stories, all focused on women and empowerment and as a result our discussion focuses mainly on the position of the brand within the story and its role. This, we believe, may contribute to a new trend focused on the adoption and applications of empowerment storytelling.*

**Keywords:** *digital storytelling, empowerment marketing, hero's journey.*

## **Introduction**

Stories have always been a form of communication, the first form of narrative we have encountered in early childhood. And although we have grown up they continue to fascinate us. They maintain and recreate bonds with old traditions, legends, archetypes, myths and symbols. There are stories that transcend generations, captivating through emotion and connecting one with the others. But there are new stories too, stories from the recent past, equally fascinating, stories from our lives that we discuss with friends over a cup of coffee or tea. With all stories, new and old, people share passion, sorrow, happiness or hardship, and most importantly they share learning, lessons, and examples of how to overcome hardship, sorrow, evil or enemies. Stories therefore help us understand ourselves and the others, enabling us to find similar or even an identical mindset with different people.

For humans and their lives, stories are universal. They encapsulate information that is kept and retrieved through narrative. The reason stories are successful in keeping us focused until the end is that they make use of the human imagination; while hearing them people tend to think more in narrative (story) than argumentative or paradigmatic ways (Schank, 1990). Additionally, not only do stories help humans find ways to understand the world by making it comprehensible but they also help them connect with others through stories and storytelling (Schank, 1990).

Stories, old or new, are an intrinsic part of the daily life. For this reason only, if not because of their beauty or engagement, stories also became marketing tools; they are generally referred to as storytelling (Vincent, 2002). Storytelling therefore provides a solution to organizations looking to promote their business, products or services; content is essential and narrative, useful, relevant and entertaining, is its key ingredient. In a post-advertising world dominated by peer-to-peer communication and small attention spans, good and compelling storytelling is the only way through which organizations, institutions, brands and people can break the mold and be noticed, remembered and supported by their customers, clients and partners.

## **Literature review**

“Myth is the highest form of storytelling known to mankind” says Laurence Vincent (2002, p.51) arguing that by using myths and storytelling, legendary brands can separate their “adventures in marketing from other

brands". For brands embracing storytelling this is an avenue through which they can be considered as an extension of consumer personality. Seth Godin (2006, April 27) agrees: "great stories succeed because they are able to capture the imagination of large or important audiences. (...) Great stories don't appeal to logic, but they often appeal to our senses. (...) Great stories are rarely aimed at everyone. (...) The most effective stories match the world view of a tiny audience—and then that tiny audience spreads the story. (...) The best stories don't teach people anything new. Instead, the best stories agree with what the audience already believes and makes the members of the audience feel smart and secure when reminded how right they were in the first place". This means that the most effective storytellers are the ones who succeed in stimulating the curiosity of others, and who manage to captivate and to emotionally connect the brand with the consumers by using fictional elements.

The M6 razor blades story from Super-Pharm represents such a case: the story of how a regular guy, with a regular family, a regular job and a life-long beard is returning to the clean and freshly-shaved look and the effect this has on him and the people around him. Created by BBR Saatchi & Saatchi, Tel Aviv, this film can no longer be considered an advertisement; it is a story of discovery and transformation (Gianatasio, 2015). The protagonist "receives *the call to adventure* –he call to adventure and transformation, he is *in doubt* –his beard was comfortable, his family accepting of it so he doubts whether the change will be welcomed; he decides to start *the quest* and he receives *help* from the razor to smooth the process - and then he *confronts his own nemesis* by checking his new image in the mirror. Amid new doubts he decides to continue on the path chosen *coming out of his journey renewed*. He then goes on to see his family who, although surprised at first by his new look, approves of it heartily. The regular guy has his happy end; he reached it by receiving some help on his way to transformation but the *moral of the story* is that it is only a little help that is needed for people to be happy and to make others happy" (Adi & Crisan, upcoming). These are the phases a hero needs to go through, in order to reestablish the order in the world s/he is living in after some event has affected the status quo.

As Campbell (2008, pp.14-15) puts it, the hero dies as a modern man; but as eternal man - perfected, unspecific, universal man - he will be reborn. His second task is to return to us, transfigured, and teach the lesson he has learned of life renewed. Regardless of location, religion or culture, the hero goes through, in accordance to myths, stories and old three rites of passage. Table 1 describes these rites together with their intermediary steps.

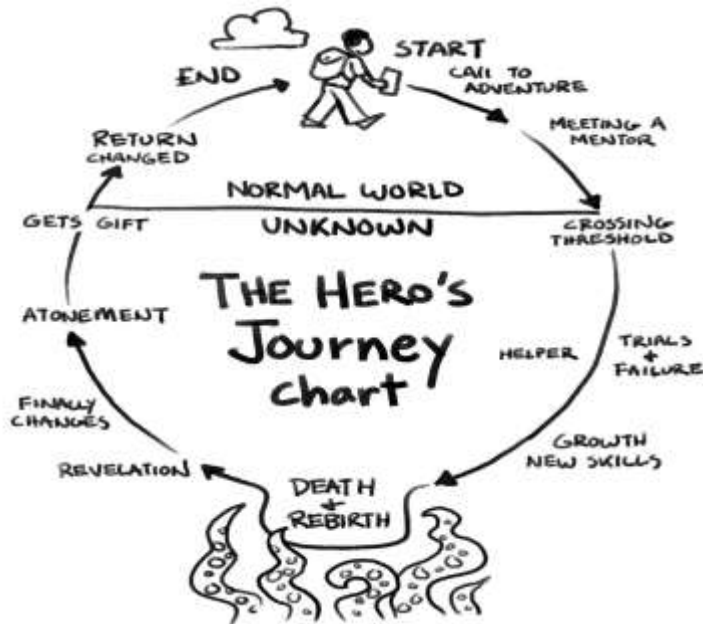
Picking up on Campbell's model, Sachs (2012) proposes a circular representation of the hero and his/her journey. In this model, a new character, the mentor, plays a pivotal role in the shaping of the hero and his/her transformation. It is the mentor that supports the hero in her/his taking the call to adventure as well as in providing the needed support for crossing the thresholds to the supernatural world and back. It is with this interpretation in mind, that Sachs (2012) suggests that brands could use storytelling as a means to engage with consumers. In doing so he argues that brands should reflect and adopt the role of mentors in their consumers' journeys, guiding them through the challenges on their own world and contributing to their personal fulfillment.

**Table 1. The phases of the hero's journey (Campbell, 1949/2008)**

<b>Separation / Departure</b>	Call to adventure
	Refusal of the call
	Supernatural aid
	Crossing 1st threshold
	Belly of whale
<b>Trial of initiation</b>	Road of trails
	Meeting Goddess
	Temptress
	Atonement
	Apotheosis
	Ultimate boon
<b>Return and integration</b>	Refusal of return
	Magic flight
	Rescue from without
	Master of two worlds
	Freedom to live

In the old paradigm (Dark Ages) the consumers were expected to easily understand the brand benefits associated with the stories presented (Kaufman, 2003): stories with heroes were believed to act as liaison elements between brand and consumers, and to allow marketers to transform the brand into a hero. The more the reader/viewer would be absorbed by the story, the less the story would be critically analysed and hence the less likely the consumers were to develop negative thoughts

when reading/viewing a story (Green & Brock, 2000). This technique could contribute to enhancing the trust consumers had in the brand and could lead to the consumers making associations that were more favorable for the brand; a positive and perception of a brand as unique could have a visible impact on the brand's equity (Keller, 1993).



*Figure 1. The hero's journey chart (Vogler, 1985)*

The connection with the consumers' mind would be, made through functional, emotional and symbolical benefits and associations (Keller, 1993). The story featuring these benefits would be stored in memory through factual, visual and emotional channels (Liljander, Gummerus & Lundqvist, 2011). The multiplicity of channels and of associations would thus increase the likelihood of the story to be remembered and recalled by the consumers.

The new model, Sachs (2012) argues, based on Jungian symbolism rather than Freudian and manipulative principles, is based on powerful and recognizable archetypes which makes it enabling and empowering. In this model, it is the customers that are the heroes so it is them who will receive the call to adventure. They may and might refuse the call, but encountering the mentor and by receiving the right advice, they could achieve almost everything. The focus thus shifts from the brand's powers and solutions (as in the Dark Ages of marketing) to the customers' free will. The brand and the hero might meet in a supernatural world, or at least in extraordinary

circumstances, however, it is always the decision of the customer that counts that makes the story go further.

Following this recipe, Procter & Gamble Romania launched in 2015 the #desteptaretele (the smarties) campaign for its Bonux detergent brand promoting stories of their customers answering the question “What is the most valuable thing that you have”? The protagonists of the campaign are women who, at some point in their lives, were faced with the challenge of supporting their families. By using their creativity and skills – one of protagonists started crafting dolls and the other designed clothes out of repurposed fabric – they found a way out their impasse. Although following the hero’s journey, the #desteptaretele videos do not leave the conclusion in the viewers’ responsibility. On the contrary, each story emphasizes the moral: “It doesn’t matter how much you have, but how much you manage to achieve with what you have”. By doing so and by distancing the brand from the product itself, Bonux becomes the mentor of its heroes.

Procter & Gamble’s Always #likeagirl campaign video from 2014 is also a good example. Filmed as a succession of on-camera testimonials, the video, currently registering close to 60 million views on YouTube, highlights the answers that children, teenagers and adults provided when asked to describe actions that would be performed by girls: running, fighting, throwing a ball. In capturing their responses, the video emphasizes the unjust portrayal of girls and its potentially devastating effect on girls’ development. Like with the cases before, the brand is not revealed until the end and it could be completely missed should one consider the stop, skip or leave the page options the internet provides. Unlike the M6 razor story described earlier where the transformational journey can be easily followed and the story is told from the perspective of its protagonist, in the #likeagirl campaign video it is the brand the one that makes the call. In this case, the brand only comes to voice an already existing concern but perhaps one that is not acknowledged yet. While maintaining the role of the enabler, the position that brand plays here is a moral one.

“Consumers do not choose *brands*, they choose *lives*” (Fournier, 1998, p.367), because “consumer-brand relationships are more a matter of perceived goal compatibility than congruence between discreet product attributes and personality trait images” (Fournier, 1998, p.366). Moreover, consumers choose to identify themselves with a brand not for the practical promise it makes, but rather for the purpose the brand embodies. This is perhaps the strongest argument behind Nike’s *Just Do It* concept success: the lack of focus on the product in favor of the athlete within each

consumer, Nike's Just Do It ultimate goal was therefore to inspire consumers to discover, push and improve their inner athlete, the product playing a secondary role. It is by facilitating this transformation that Nike has gained loyal consumers and it is by using these same principles that brands become of a great importance in the story that consumers talk about (Fournier, 1998).

Storytelling therefore enables brands to interpret reality by creating new possibilities for their consumers to understand it. In this new paradigm, consumers use brands in an instrumental way so that they can narrate their own vision of the story. This utilitarian approach to brands is essential as it is only by being appropriated and integrated into the consumers' environment and universe, brands can connect with them (Cooper, Schembri & Miller, 2010).

Cooper et al. (2010) textual analysis of the brand narratives evident in the James Bond films, showed that brand-self narratives reinforce a particular archetypal myth of a lover, hero, or outlaw, also help "luxury brands become objects of desire, fueling consumer aspirations and giving consumers frames of reference in their own consumption ideals". More specifically, it is Bollinger, Aston Martin and Jaguar that facilitate James Bond's portrayal as a lover, a hero and an outlaw. While Bollinger reminds the viewer of romance and love, Aston Martin stands for sophistication and invincibility while Jaguar brings a meaning of danger and rebellion against the status quo into the picture. The story that is thus created around these three brands and in the context of the James Bond movies become symbolic forms of cinematographic consumption (Cooper et al., 2010) that ease the development of both characters and movie narrative. Beyond the movie experience, viewers-consumers have can build their own narrative story of consumption. The consumers' purchase or interaction with the brands enables them to recreate the mythical stories represented in the films and give them an opportunity to embody themselves one of the archetypes portrayed by James Bond (Cooper et al., 2010). The consumers therefore accessing these brand stories, through their exposure to media and pop culture (movies, music, art) have the opportunity to both build their self-identity while also being part of a social experience at the same time. Word of mouth is a side effect of storytelling. When encountering a convincing story, consumers will want to share or retell it to others as well. By making the brand more interesting, the story also enables it to create topics of conversations. This is how consumers can become brand ambassadors, by contributing, joining and sharing the brand story (Liljander et al., 2011). However, to be successful, the brand and its story must be perceived and

understood as authentic, because many consumers are extremely critical to what they consider manipulative marketing (Douglas, 2002).

Despite this people like fictional stories but only if they can relate to the characters. Thus a story does not necessary need to be based on real events, as long the consumer sees it as real. Often times, the relationship between the consumer and the brand only needs to appear authentic. A story that has as purpose the creation of a certain environment does not need to be true, but stories must never be perceived as deceiving. If a fictional story is presented from the marketing point of view as real, eventually it will lead to the loss of trust in the story and in the brand, with extremely high damage (Liljander et al., 2011) - a perceived whitewashing being just one of them. This is why it is highly recommended to portray heroes with whom the viewers can relate with, both as characters and with their situation.

Sachs' (2012) new hero's journey model provides brands with opportunities to expand in scope the stories they tell, and add in the mix the corporate social responsibility, public affairs and internal communication among others. Without these taking center stage within the organization there is no guarantee that the brand will benefit from a genuine public support from the main stakeholders, customers included. HSBC's internal communication TV program provides an example of how Sachs' model could be expanded, showing how organizations can and should recognize the heroes within their employees. Unlike #desteptaretele, HSBC NOW is leaving the moral of each story both in the hands of the narrators-protagonist and in those of the viewing public. The stories are of interest and concern to HSBC's worldwide workforce - from corruption to healthy lifestyle to diversity and inclusion - and by sharing them openly the organization is truly living up to its role as enabler and supporter of the hero in all of us. The fact that HSBC's employees have demanded to make HSBC NOW publicly available on YouTube so that content could be accessed anytime and anywhere is testimony to the value and success of this storytelling initiatives.

This is, after all, as close as it gets to the classic illustration of Campbell's (2008) Hero's Journey depicted in the *Hero with a Thousand Faces* and Sachs' (2012) abandonment of the Dark Age of Marketing and the rise of Empowerment Marketing. "Empowerment storytelling is about the positive journey of transformation, renewal and reinvention that a protagonist goes through. As the protagonist is a regular Joe/Jane, this type of storytelling is increasingly appealing to individuals, be they consumers, employees, students or citizens. In the journey that they depict, the individual gets to play the central role and the brands become enablers and supporters of



transformation. Unlike in the past when brands presented themselves as magical solutions (whose effect wears off and needs to be replied and renewed) and therefore add-ons, brands have opportunity to become embedded in their users and consumers lives by supporting their real, personal and long-lasting transformation.” (Adi & Crisan, upcoming).

In an age where trust is generally decreasing, the *grand* stories of legitimation (Lyotard, 1993) whether political, religious or economic are replaced with small stories of legitimation. This is where digital storytelling (Lambert, 2013), vlogs, oral histories like the ones collected, preserved and shared by StoryCorps or the exceptional stories of human life curated, shared and designed to “encourage contemplation and depth” by Cowbird fit in. This paper aims to further explore campaigns and videos sharing this storytelling model, in an attempt not only to expand the pool of examples and analyses in this scarce field but also to raise questions about the potential value storytelling might have for organizations.

## Methodology

This paper aims to evaluate four stories, all focused on women and empowerment. Created by two organizations already referenced for their successful adoption and implementation of Sachs’ storytelling modeling, the four stories are in video format and are available online. Although sharing a similar theme, they are in terms of format, visibility and core target audience different from one another, which is why we chose them for analysis. The videos are:

- HSBC NOW’s - Standing Out in a ‘Mans’s World’, about New York-based Katia Bouazza, Head of Capital Financing for Latin America at HSBC;
- HSBC NOW’s – A Woman’s world, about Naina Lai Kidwai, Chairman of HSBC India;
- P&G’s Always #likeagirl kick off campaign and,
- P&G’s Always #likeagirl sequel campaign video, Unstoppable.

By looking at two videos from each organization that were uploaded almost a calendar year apart, our analysis not only enables comparison of the structure and evolution of the storytelling concept within the same organization but invites discussions about the exploration, evolution and appropriation of storytelling techniques both for marketing and internal communication purposes.

Uploaded on YouTube on June 26, 2014 the Always #likeagirl kickoff video currently registers almost 60 million views and more than 45,000

comments, its sequel enjoying similar popularity: almost 38 million views and more than 4,000 comments since July 7, 2015. However, both videos have enjoyed the visibility afforded by a coordinated integrated and social media communication campaign, whose aims, among others was to drive visibility and traffic to the videos. Unlike then, HSBC NOW's main audience is comprised of HSBC employees. Uploaded on May 16, 2014, the video about HSBC India's Chairman professional journey has acquired almost 2,500 views while the one comprising the reflections of the Head of Capital Financing for Latin America on her rise and success garnering almost 600 views since September 8, 2015, the date of its upload.

While the HSBC videos selected for analysis use monologue as a narrative technique, the P&G videos are presented as a form of dialogue between a series of narrators and a researcher, interrupted by slides with texts alluding to some empirical evidence.

In evaluating qualitatively the stories as told by each narrator through the Hero's Journey steps, we focus mainly on the narrator's declarative, verbal statements and their correspondence with each of the stages of the journey. In reflecting on the hero's journey, our discussion however focuses mainly on the position of the brand within the story and its role. This, we believe, allows for a richer discussion about the adoption and applications of empowerment storytelling.

## **Results and Discussion**

In a "Woman's world" the emphasis is on the transformational journey of Naina Lai Kidwai, Chairman of HSBC India. She is portrayed as a rebel with a strong conviction that has to leave her world (India) to pursue her dream and call to adventure and through her conviction, resilience and perseverance manages to change (or at least witness the change) that she so much desired. The specific role of the mentor in this case is not directly linked with HSBC but rather her American Alma Mater, the Harvard Business School, identified as the place she believed she could join to pursue her dream and answer her call to adventure. The revelation here is retrospective (that at the time corporates did not do much for women), however it points out to major change within HSBC but also the industry. HSBC therefore in this case recognized as facilitator, catalyst and embodiment of "corporates" embracing change and supporting women in leading positions. Although it does not play the mentor role, HSBC is both the one making Naina Lai Kidwai her career gift as well as enabling her renewed start in the better world that she helped craft.

In Katia Bouazza's "Standing out in a Man's World", the call to adventure of entering a male dominated world shares similarities with Naina Lai Kidwai's story. This shows the complexity of storytelling and the fine yet nuanced opportunities for interpretation that each journey represents. While both characters share their determination for excellence, the catalyst in Naina Lai Kidwai's place was within her own environment as much as it was within herself. For Katia Bouazza however the call to adventure is much more related to her journey and career within HSBC.

In this constellation, HSBC is close to the holder of a magical solution, with the answers to problems and challenges to be found within the system and addressed by the system itself through more training and striving to obtain a better pool of candidates. Unlike in Naina Lai Kidwai's story that is fully personal and focused on the personal transformation and journey, Katia Bouazza's story feels at times contaminated by her strong connection with HSBC and her sharing her journey with it, positing closer to the Dark Ages of marketing recipe than that of empowerment marketing. Tables 2 and 3 below capture these differences.

**Table 2. HSBC - A woman's world**

<b>Separation / Departure</b>	Call to adventure	I had so many uncles and aunties who were asking when I was going to get married...
	Refusal of the call	So, well, why should I, quite enjoying standing up, demonstrating that I was a bit of a rebel.  I wanted to enter a workplace where women actually didn't exist...
	Meeting a mentor	I did want to go abroad and study and <b>Harvard Business School</b> was what stood out as the right place for me to go.
	Helper - trial and failure	It is really the early years that were the toughest...
	Grows new skills	Just really ensuring that people took me seriously, that I was there for the long run, that I was no different to the guys, I worked as hard if not harder and that I was able to deliver.
<b>Trial of initiation</b>	Death and rebirth	
	Revelation	Corporates did not do very much for women at the time.
	Finally changes	

	Atonement	
	Gets gift	When I started my career you were lucky if you had a washroom on the same floor which you worked, so typically you had to tread two floors to make it to a washroom.  Then that changed over time and that tells you the desire and ability of companies to embrace the female force in their organizations changes.
<b>Return and integration</b>	Return changed	When I became Head of HSBC I was only the second woman head of a bank in India.
	End/Start	But five years later, we had another four and now we have fourteen heads of women. So the change happens quickly.

**Table 3. Analysis of Standing Out in „A Man's World“**

<b>Separation / Departure</b>	Call to adventure	Investment banking is a tough industry, not an easy choice.
	Refusal of the call	Someone brought to my attention HSBC but nobody knew about HSBC then. It was supposed to be a temporary job
	Meeting a mentor	Early years of travel helped me deal with uncertainty.
	Helper - trial and failure	In 2003 <b>the bank</b> decided to expand to Latin America, given my experience that bank thought I could do well, I was faced with a very tough choice between established successful Asia and Latin America
	Grows new skills	You have to be persistent, you have to take risk.
<b>Trial of initiation</b>	Death and rebirth	We, <b>the bank</b> , are here because of the team, from nobody to number one.
	Revelation	I stop and think I am the only woman in the room, the only woman at the dinner, the only woman in the board.
	Finally changes	Men and women go for the same position. Maybe men are not that well prepared, but they go for it. Women go for it if they are perfectly prepared.
	Atonement	
	Gets gift	<b>We will receive prizes and awards.</b> See the results, something you have contributed to come

		to fruition.
<b>Return and integration</b>	Return changed	<b>We</b> should provide a lot more support and training to have a better pool of candidates.
	End/Start	

In P&G's #likeagirl kick-off campaign case, the protagonist is not singular, but rather a metaphor of society at large. In this situation, the brand assumes the position of mentor and challenger, making a moral judgement and launching a call to adventure aimed at correcting something perceived as unjust: the girls plummeting confidence in puberty. The position of the brand however is subtle, hidden behind the voice of the director asking her questions to the protagonists. The questions addressed to each interviewee are direct and their answers personal, making the final message of the story empowering. This is achieved through the distancing of the brand from the product it represents and its choosing to connect more strongly to the challenge launched.

This is also the case for the sequel campaign, however in this case the invitation to the challenge of breaking barriers and its metaphorical concept of boxes as keepers of stereotypes makes it even stronger than the first campaign video.

**Table 4. Always #likeagirl**

<b>Separation / Departure</b>	Call to adventure	Is #likeagirl a good or a bad thing?
	Refusal of the call	Actually I don't know.... It sounds like a bad think, it sounds like you are trying to humiliate someone
	Meeting a mentor	Girls' confidence plummets during puberty. Always wants to change that.
	Helper - trial and failure	The questions asked to participants in the video...
	Grows new skills	
<b>Trial of initiation</b>	Death and rebirth	
	Revelation	When somebody says you hit like a girl as an insult, it's like well what does that mean, 'cause they think they are a strong person, it's kind of like telling them that they are weak.
	Finally changes	

	Atonement	Keep doing it 'cause it's working, doesn't matter what they say.
	Gets gift	Redo the action as you would normally do it...without thinking of the stereotype.
<b>Return and integration</b>	Return changed	Yes, I kick like a girl and I swim like a girl and I walk like a girl and I wake up in the morning like a girl, because I am a girl and that's not something that I should be ashamed of so I am gonna' do it anyway.
	End/Start	Let's make #likeagirl mean amazing things. Why can't run #likeagirl also mean win the race?

**Table 5. Analysis of Unstoppable**

<b>Separation / Departure</b>	Call to adventure	Go, grab a box. it's your limitation
	Meeting a mentor	Write the things that you said that are limiting you
	Helper - trial and failure	I did quit
	Grows new skills	I tried harder and harder
<b>Trial of initiation</b>	Death and rebirth	I said ok, no more! Beak that box, maybe explode it, kick them
	Revelation	Do whatever you want, live your dream
	Finally changes	
	Atonement	
	Gets gift	
<b>Return and integration</b>	Return changed	I love the word unstoppable.
	End/Start	

However, in the sequel campaign case, we notice that the brand is not mentioned at all in the video (except at the end); the entire discussion is focused on the transformational journey of the girls, with some empirical data whose accuracy cannot be demonstrated. Like in the kick-off campaign, these statements are only pretexts for further introspection. No reference to the brand or a solution that the brand proposes is made. The participants have found through the questions asked and tasks they have undertaken the inner strength to overcome challenges. In this way, the video director, which plays the role of the brand representative makes a good job in

counseling and orienting the attitude but not offering the final word of wisdom, the solution to the issue young girls are facing. Tables 4 and 5 above captured these differences.

By assuming the role of the challenger and mentor, Always plays better the mentor part as described by Sachs however we can also argue that the mere nature of its campaign make for a more straightforward application of Sachs' empowerment marketing principles.

Speaking however of women empowerment, all examples provide strong and compelling stories. The HSBC stories are more reflective and personal, focusing on a fait-accomplis, on a journey ended and the power of the personal example. P&G's campaign videos on the other case could represent, could represent just the start of the journey, their value relying in their power to continue to propagate the call to adventure and the challenge within it.

## Conclusions

This article analyzed four videos produced by two businesses, HSBC and &G, sharing a common theme: women empowerment. Using a qualitative interpretive approach, the videos were analyzed using Sachs' model of the hero's journey. While all the videos include an empowering message, it is only three of them that reproduce better Sachs' new model of empowerment storytelling. Out of these, P&G's videos have a stronger message due to the brand's distancing from the product and its ready adoption of the challenger position. For HSBC's video, while the personal story and its reflection is what brings closer to empowerment storytelling, the ambiguity of the brand's position (only assumed or only emerging close to the end of the journey as the gift holder) makes it perhaps less strong than P&G's video messages.

All the stories analyzed present emotional and symbolical elements (Keller, 1993) and they too enable viewers to connect with the brand and use it as an extension of their personality (Cooper, Schembri and Miller, 2010).

For P&G, the positive perception of its challenging and mentoring position could be transformed into increased customer loyalty, something that Fournier (1998) alluded to. For HSBC, the testimonial and storytelling efforts could support the organization in its efforts to communicate authentically, the personal and unedited narratives enabling increased staff loyalty through increased transparency. This confirms that storytelling

when well used could have a positive contribution to an organization perceived value, authenticity and potentially lead to increased consumer loyalty or employee support.

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